EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES
AVENGERS
MARVEL
28
LGY#728
STARBRAND
REBORN PART TWO
AARON • MCGUINNESS
MORALES • KEITH

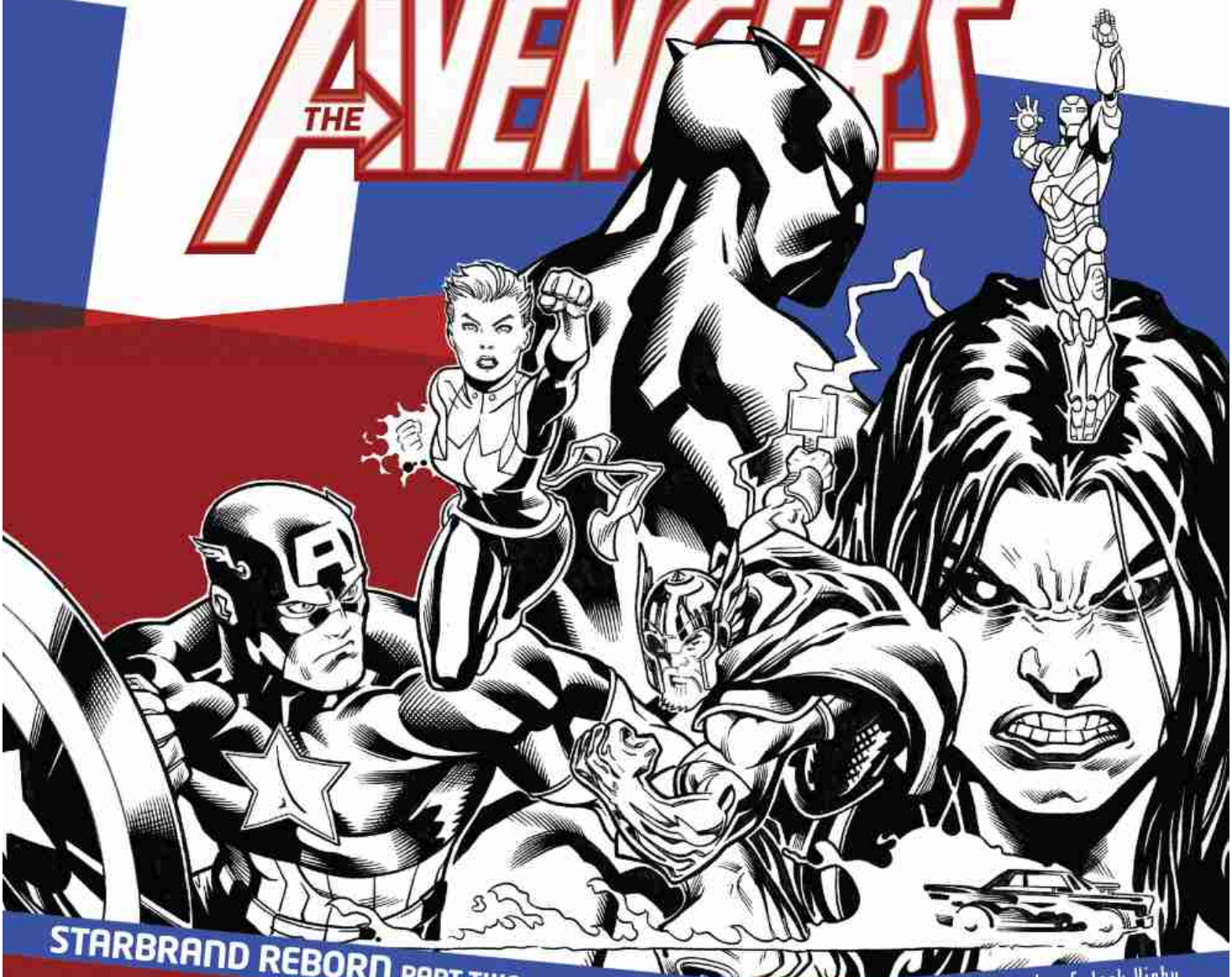
And there came a day, a day unlike any other, when Earth's Mightiest Heroes found themselves united against a common threat. On that day, the Avengers were born. To fight the foes no single super hero could withstand.

Since the dawn of time, the planetary defense mechanism known as the Starbrand has granted a number of wielders virtually infinite power. The most recent Starbrand was driven mad and died in a confrontation with Ghost Rider, so when signs indicated his successor was wreaking havoc out in space, the Avengers gave chase.

But the mission quickly went sideways. The team is now trapped in a Shi'ar prison galaxy, half of them fighting for survival on a derelict ship with a Brood-infected Thor and the other half racing through space in Robbie's Hell Charger, desperately trying to escape the Silver Surfer!

EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES #28

# THE AVENGERS



## STARBRAND REBORN PART TWO

Avengers created by Stan Lee & Jack Kirby

## "THE THREE HERALDS"

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DAYS AGO.
MY BROTHER *HERALDS.*
WE HAVE BEEN DRAWN TOGETHER FROM THE FAR CORNERS OF THE STELLAR SEAS FOR A COMMON PURPOSE.
WE MUST PUT ASIDE THE ISSUES WE HAVE HAD IN THE PAST.
HMPRH.
IF BY *ISSUES,* SURFER, YOU MEAN WE'VE FOUGHT TO *HACK* EACH OTHER INTO BUCKETS OF *BLOODY SPACE CHUM,* THEN YES, BY THE GUTS OF GALACTUS, ISSUES WE *HAVE.*
AND SOME OF US STILL BELIEVE THAT'S A FINE IDEA.
TAME YOUR TONGUE, *TERRAX,* OR I WILL GLADLY TAME IT FOR YOU.
WITH *FIRE.*

THE RAVENSTARR MAXIMUM-SECURITY PRISON GALAXY.
MIND YOUR OWN TONGUE, FIRELORD, YOU XANDARIAN--
GENTLEMEN. PLEASE.
WE ARE BOUND TO ONE ANOTHER FOREVER BY THE POWER COSMIC, WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT.
WHICH IS WHY WE HAVE BEEN CALLED HERE BY THE CELESTIAL FATES.
WE ALONE HAVE THE POWER TO AVERT THE UNIVERSAL ARMAGEDDON NOW BREWING INSIDE THIS SHI'AR PRISON GALAXY.
THREE HERALDS.
WHO COME SEEKING A STAR.
AND IF WE AGREE ON NOTHING ELSE, LET US AT LEAST BE IN GRIM UNISON...
...WHEN IT COMES TO WHAT MUST BE DONE... ONCE THAT STAR IS FOUND.
YES.
BLOODY ASTEROIDS, YES.
THEN IT IS AGREED. AND WOE UNTO ANYONE WHO DARES STAND BETWEEN THE THREE HERALDS...

"...AND THE STARBRAND."
NOW.
BROOD THOR WILL FEAST ON YOUR FLESH!
CAP, THIS IS CAROL. WHAT'S HAPPENING? ARE YOU UNDER ATTACK?
BROOD THOR WILL LAY HIS MIGHTY EGGS IN YOUR SOFT LITTLE FACE!
UUGH!
YOU MIGHT SAY THAT, CAROL.
THOR IS OUT OF CONTROL. I'M AFRAID THIS CALLS... FOR EXTREME MEASURES.

HHRRRGH!
GRRRRRGH!
I REMEMBER THIS BEING A LOT EASIER.
YOU! YOU TRY TO STEAL HAMMER!
NO ONE LIFT HAMMER BUT BROOD OF THUNDER!
HE'S SLOWER THAN NORMAL. SLUGGISH. HIS BODY'S FIGHTING THE INFECTION.
BUT A BLOW FROM THAT URU ARM OF HIS WILL STILL SHATTER EVERY BONE IN MY BODY.
ONLY ONE CHANCE AT THIS.
I'M SORRY, OLD FRIEND. I TRULY AM.
I WAS ALWAYS RAISED TO RESPECT GOD.
THINK WORTHY THOUGHTS. BASEBALL. APPLE PIE. PUNCHING NAZIS.

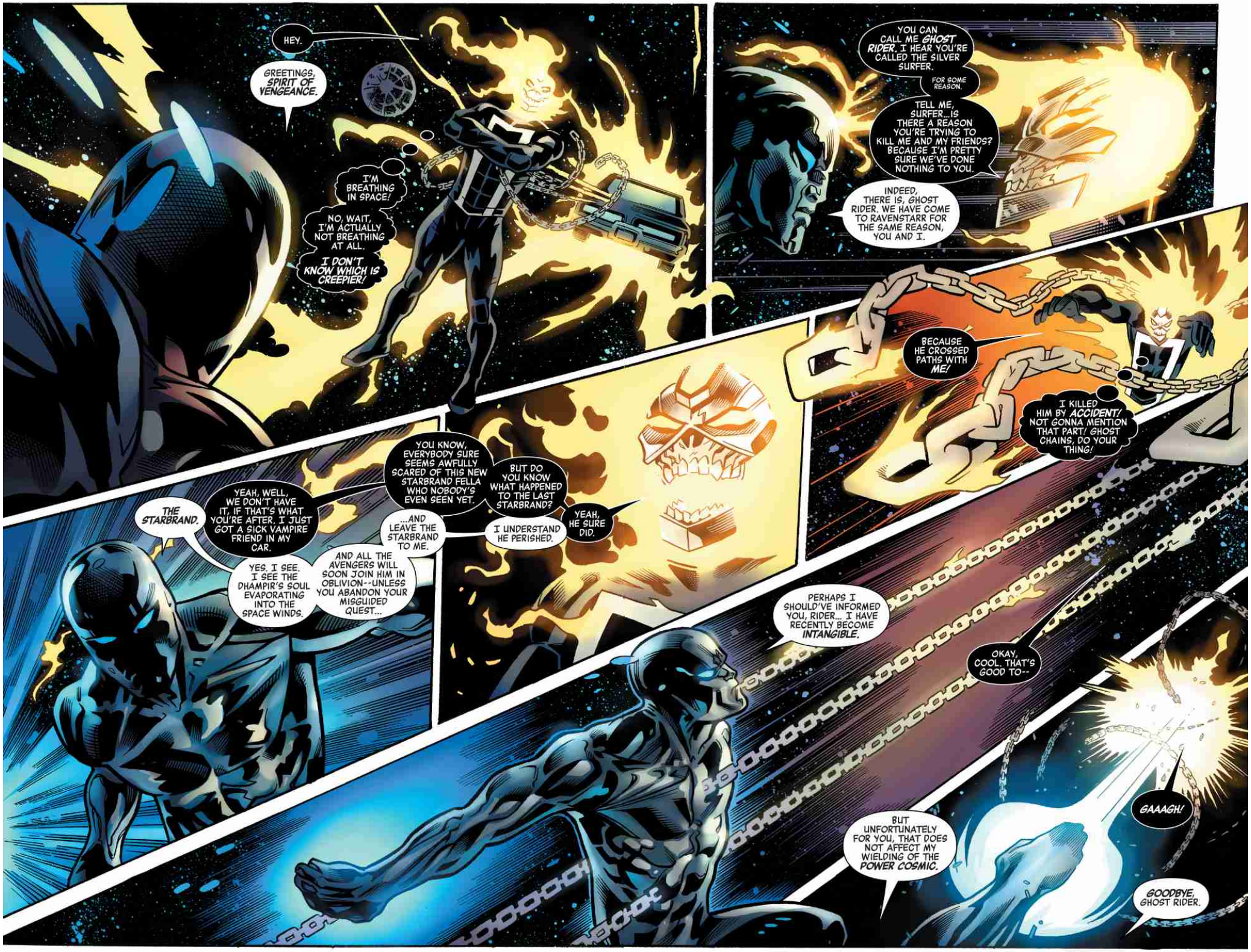
BUT EVEN GOD HAS A BAD DAY NOW AND THEN!

RRGH?
HE'S AWAKE.
HEY, HOW'RE YOU FEELING, BIG GUY?
THOR... HEAD HURT.
WHY THOR FEEL LIKE... SOMEONE HIT HIM WITH HAMMER?
YEAH, MUST BE THE BROOD INFECTION. FEEL FREE TO TAKE IT EASY FOR A SPELL.
WE'RE GONNA GET YOU HELP, I PROMISE. CAROL FOUND US A NEW SHIP--AND ME SOME NEW CLOTHES--SO WE'RE ON THE MOVE AGAIN.
WHO... MOVED HAMMER?
YOU DID, BUDDY. YOU'RE *WORTHY*, REMEMBER? YOU'RE THE MIGHTY THOR.
BE READY FOR ANYTHING. HE LIKES TO GO FOR THE FACE.
I... I AM?
AYE.
I...AM... THE MIGHTY *THOR.*

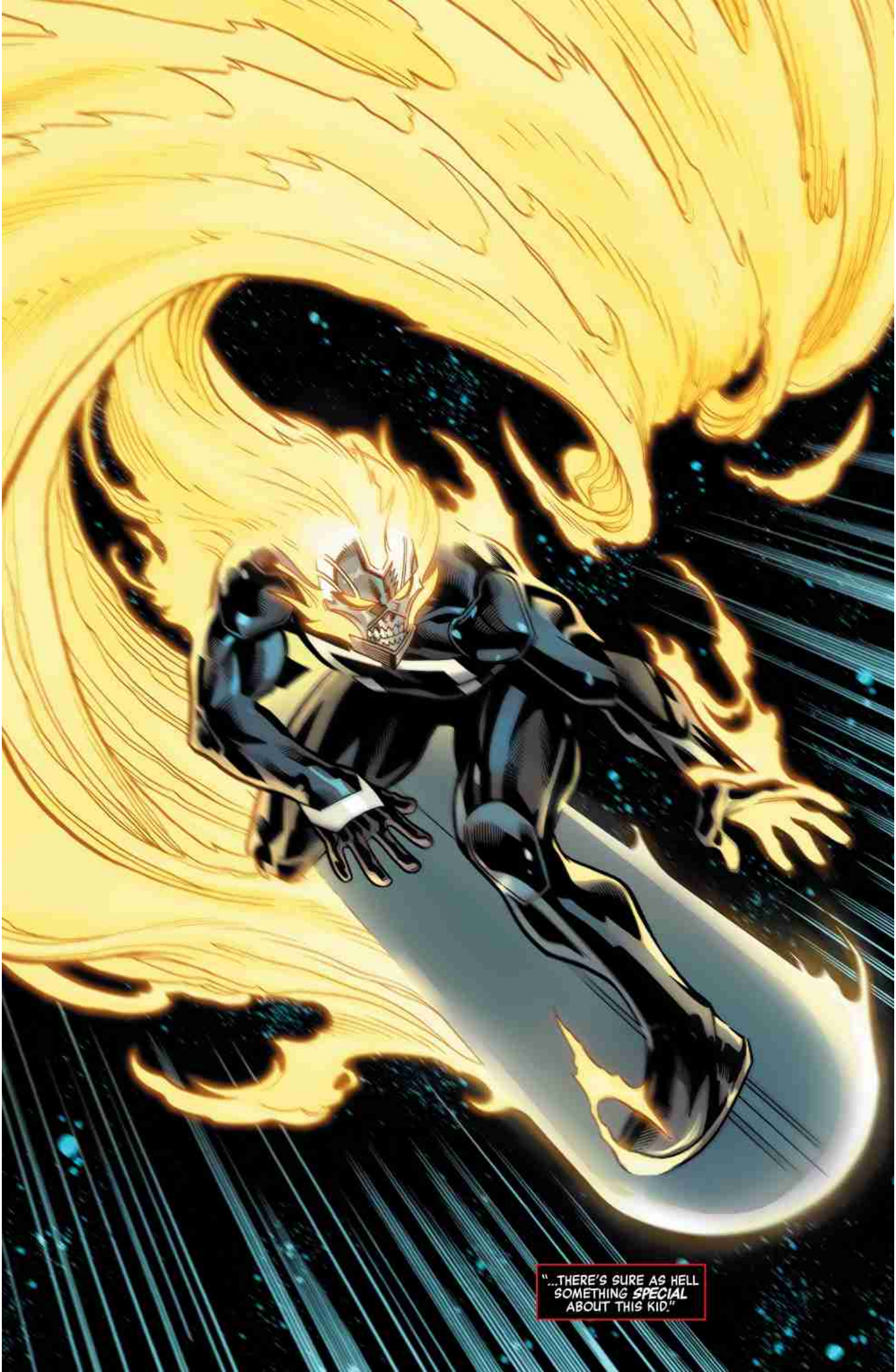
WHEW.
HE'S ONLY GETTING WORSE, CAP. WE'VE GOT TO GET HIM OUT OF THIS PRISON AS SOON AS POSSIBLE--WHILE THERE'S STILL TIME TO SAVE WHATEVER'S LEFT OF THE REAL HIM.
I KNOW, CAROL. BUT WE HAVE A MISSION. YOU'VE SEEN THE PATH OF DESTRUCTION THE SAME AS I HAVE. ENTIRE WORLDS BURNED TO A CRISP.
THE SOONER WE FIND THE STARBRAND AND END THIS, THE SOONER WE CAN SAVE OUR FRIEND.
THEN WE BETTER GET MOVING.
JEN, YOU READY OUT THERE?
HRGH.
WE DON'T WANNA LEAVE THE MIGHTY QUIN LYING AROUND FOR JUST ANYONE TO FIND. SO LET'S CLEAN UP AFTER OURSELVES, HULK STYLE.
GOOD CHANCE TO GIVE MY NEW WAKANDAN BATTLE SUIT A TRIAL RUN.
ME AND T'CHALLA DESIGNED IT TO HELP ABSORB MY GAMMA EMISSIONS. HELP ME CONTAIN THEM. AND WHEN THE TIME COMES...
...VENT THEM, WITH MAXIMUM EFFECT!

NICE WORK, JEN. JOIN US WHENEVER YOU'RE READY. THIS STARJAMMER TRAIN IS LEAVING THE STATION.
DAMN.
SOMETIMES IT FEELS REALLY GOOD TO BE A HULK.
HHRHRRRRRGGH!!!
ALL RIGHT, WHICH WAY, CAPTAIN CORSAIR?
YOU KNOW WHICH WAY, CAROL. WE KEEP FOLLOWING THE TRAIL OF BURNED PLANETS UNTIL WE FIND THE STARBRAND.
"YEAH, AND THEN WHAT?"
"AND THEN I IMAGINE WE'LL HAVE ONE HELL OF A FIGHT ON OUR HANDS."

GAGH, NOW HE'S SHOOTING AT US! WHO IS THIS GUY?!
THAT'S THE SILVER SURFER, A FORMER HERALD OF GALACTUS. I THOUGHT HE WAS ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS. BUT IT'S ALWAYS HARD TO TELL WITH THESE SPACE PEOPLE.
YOU SURE YOU'RE THINKING OF THE RIGHT GUY? THERE IS NOT A DAMN THING SILVER ABOUT THIS DUDE!
AAARGGH!
BLADE IS GETTING WORSE BY THE SECOND. TURNS OUT RED SUNLIGHT IS LETHAL TO HIS VAMPIRE DNA. WE'VE GOT TO GET HIM OUT OF THIS SOLAR SYSTEM.
OKAY, ENOUGH OF THIS. NO AVENGERS ARE DYING IN MY CAR.
BOY-THING, TAKE THE WHEEL.
MRRP?
ROBBIE, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?
I'M JUST GONNA TALK TO HIM. SEE WHAT HE WANTS.
IT'S OKAY, MS. WIDOW, I'M FROM LOS ANGELES. I DEAL WITH SURFERS ALL THE TIME.
WAIT, CAN I BREATHE IN SPACE? NO, NO ONE CAN BREATHE IN SPACE, YOU IDIOT! GET BACK IN THE...


HEY.
GREETINGS, SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE.
I'M BREATHING IN SPACE!
NO, WAIT, I'M ACTUALLY NOT BREATHING AT ALL.
I DON'T KNOW WHICH IS CREEPIER!
YOU CAN CALL ME GHOST RIDER. I HEAR YOU'RE CALLED THE SILVER SURFER.
FOR SOME REASON.
TELL ME, SURFER...IS THERE A REASON YOU'RE TRYING TO KILL ME AND MY FRIENDS? BECAUSE I'M PRETTY SURE WE'VE DONE NOTHING TO YOU.
INDEED, THERE IS, GHOST RIDER. WE HAVE COME TO RAVENSTARR FOR THE SAME REASON, YOU AND I.
BECAUSE HE CROSSED PATHS WITH ME!
I KILLED HIM BY ACCIDENT! NOT GONNA MENTION THAT PART! GHOST CHAINS, DO YOUR THING!
YOU KNOW, EVERYBODY SURE SEEMS AWFULLY SCARED OF THIS NEW STARBRAND FELLA WHO NOBODY'S EVEN SEEN YET.
BUT DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LAST STARBRAND?
YEAH, HE SURE DID.
I UNDERSTAND HE PERISHED.
...AND LEAVE THE STARBRAND TO ME.
THE STARBRAND.
YEAH, WELL, WE DON'T HAVE IT. IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE AFTER, I JUST GOT A SICK VAMPIRE FRIEND IN MY CAR.
YES. I SEE. I SEE THE DHAMPIR'S SOUL EVAPORATING INTO THE SPACE WINDS.
AND ALL THE AVENGERS WILL SOON JOIN HIM IN OBLIVION--UNLESS YOU ABANDON YOUR MISGUIDED QUEST...
PERHAPS I SHOULD'VE INFORMED YOU, RIDER... I HAVE RECENTLY BECOME INTANGIBLE.
OKAY, COOL. THAT'S GOOD TO--
BUT UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU, THAT DOES NOT AFFECT MY WIELDING OF THE POWER COSMIC.
GAAAGH!
GOODBYE, GHOST RIDER.

WE JUST LOST THE KID.
BOY-THING, MOVE OVER-- I'M TAKING THE WHEEL.
I AM SORRY, AVENGERS. BUT I CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO STAND IN THE WAY OF MY MISSION. THE FATE OF ALL WORLDS DEPENDS ON IT.
INTANGIBLE, HUH? GOOD TRICK.
IMPOSSIBLE! THE BOARD IS INTANGIBLE TOO. HOW ARE YOU...
YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN SEE SOULS.
GRRGGH!!!
I SEE YOUR SINS, NORRIN RADD. THEY'RE AS MANY AS THE DAMN STARS. AND ANY SINNER ALIVE...
...CAN FEEL THE BURN OF HELLFIRE!
I'LL BE DAMNED.
I'VE KNOWN A FEW GHOST RIDERS IN MY TIME. BUT I CAN ALREADY TELL...

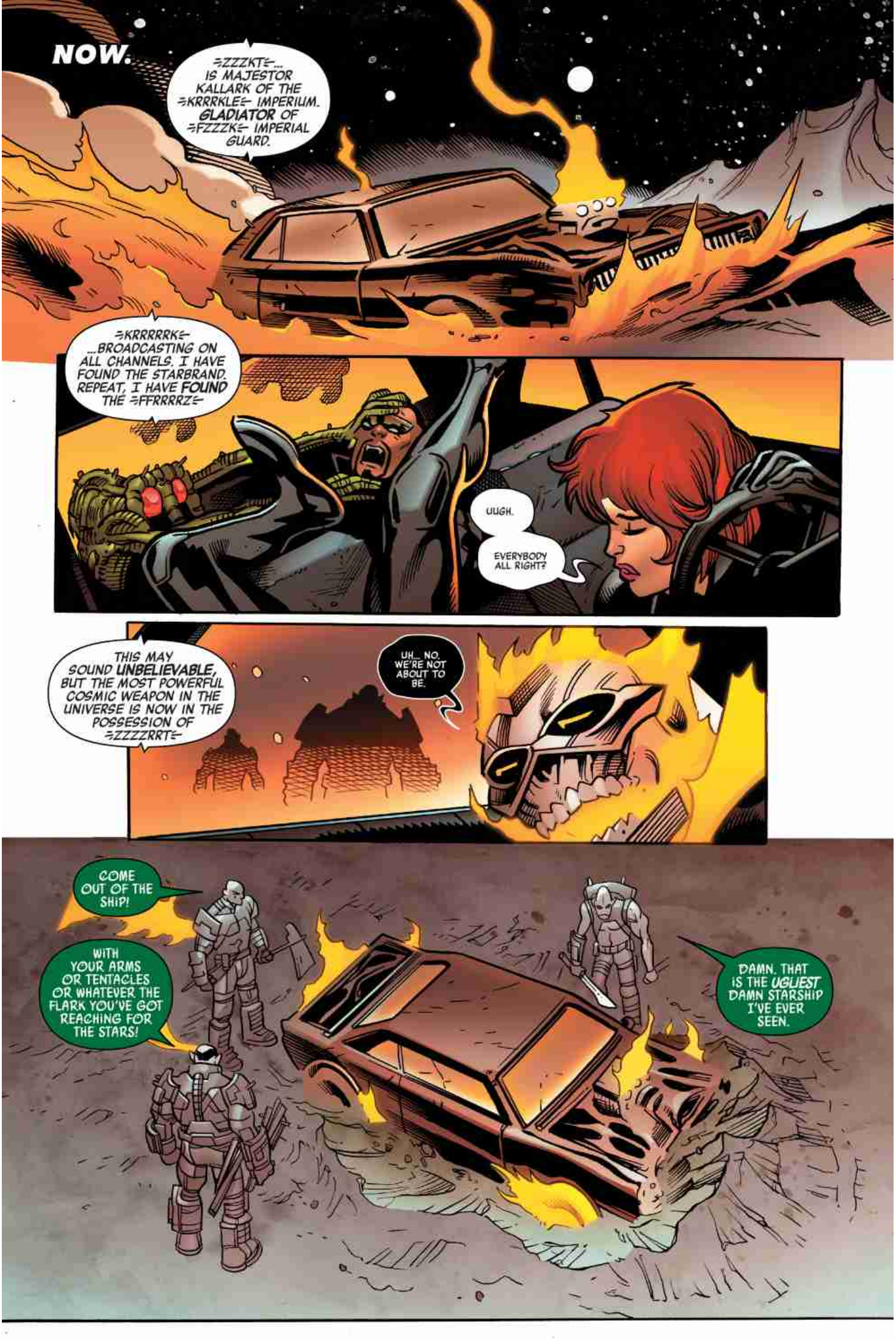

"...THERE'S SURE AS HELL SOMETHING *SPECIAL* ABOUT THIS KID."

I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO STEER THIS THING!
DID ANYBODY SEE WHERE THE SURFER WENT? SOMETHING TELLS ME HE'S NOT FAR A--
TO ME, MY BOARD.
WHOA!
YEP. HE'S STILL BACK THERE.
LOOK OUT! I CAN'T SEE WHERE I'M...
THE STARBRAND. THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE. THE DEFEAT OF THE CELESTIAL FINAL HOST.
I SEE WHAT YOU ARE BUILDING, AVENGERS. EVEN IF YOU DO NOT.
BUT ALL THE PRIMORDIAL FORCES OF YOUR WORLD WILL NOT SAVE YOU...
...FROM THE COSMIC JUSTICE OF THE SURFER.
GAAARGH! WE'RE OUT OF CONTROL! HOLD ON!
WE'RE GONNA CRASH!
SOMETIMES LIFE COMES AT YOU FAST. OR SO I'VE HEARD.

BACK ON EARTH.
I DON'T USUALLY HAVE MUCH OF A PROBLEM SEEING WHAT'S COMING. BEING THE WORLD'S MOST RENOWNED FUTURIST AND ALL.
BUT WHEN IT COMES TO DEALING WITH THE PAST--WELL...
A MILLION YEARS EARLIER.
...THAT CATCHES UP TO ALL OF US NOW AND AGAIN.
GRRRRRRGGGH!!!

WHAT THE HELL IS THIS? WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE?
LAST THING I KNEW, I WAS IN A CAVE AND THERE WAS A SUDDEN ENERGY SURGE AND...
OH, OH HELL. THIS IS TIME TRAVEL, ISN'T IT? THAT WOULD EXPLAIN THE...
GUUGH!
HAMMER.
ANOTHER FOUL TIME-RAIDER, LOOKING FOR EASY PLUNDER.
YOU WILL NOT FIND IT HERE, KNAVE. JUST AS YOUR PREDECESSORS DID NOT.
YES, HE IS MOST DEFINITELY TIME-DISPLACED.
BUT THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT HIM THAT FEELS DIFFERENT FROM THE ARMORED DESPOTS AND FUTURISTIC CONQUERORS WHO'VE COME BEFORE.
BAH, WHAT DOES IT MATTER, AGAMOTTO?
LIKE THOSE OTHER POMPOUS WOULD-BE INVADERS FROM THE YEARS YET TO COME, HE THINKS THIS PERIOD OF TIME TO BE PRIMITIVE. RIPE FOR TAKING.

NO.
NO, I MOST ASSUREDLY DID NOT.
NOW, WHO ARE YOU ALL AGAIN?
BUT HE DID NOT COUNT ON US.
I'M ABOUT TO DIE AT THE BEGINNING OF TIME.
AT THE HANDS OF SOME... PREHISTORIC AVENGERS.
YEAH.
DIDN'T SEE THAT ONE COMING.
RRRRRRGGGH!!!


NOW.
=ZZZKT=... IS MAJESTOR KALLARK OF THE =KRRRKLE= IMPERIUM. GLADIATOR OF =FZZZK= IMPERIAL GUARD.
=KRRRRRK= ...BROADCASTING ON ALL CHANNELS. I HAVE FOUND THE STARBRAND. REPEAT, I HAVE FOUND THE =FFRRRRZ=
UUGH.
EVERYBODY ALL RIGHT?
THIS MAY SOUND UNBELIEVABLE, BUT THE MOST POWERFUL COSMIC WEAPON IN THE UNIVERSE IS NOW IN THE POSSESSION OF =ZZZZRRT=
UH... NO. WE'RE NOT ABOUT TO BE.
COME OUT OF THE SHIP!
WITH YOUR ARMS OR TENTACLES OR WHATEVER THE FLARK YOU'VE GOT REACHING FOR THE STARS!
DAMN. THAT IS THE UGLIEST DAMN STARSHIP I'VE EVER SEEN.

I KNOW TRAINED KILLERS WHEN I SEE THEM. EVEN WHEN THEY'RE GREEN.
THESE INMATES WANT OUR SHIP. CAR. WHATEVER. WITHOUT IT, WE'LL BE DEAD. BLADE MIGHT ALREADY BE DEAD.
WE'LL NEED OUR HEAVIEST HITTER FOR THIS.
IT'S COOL. I GOT THIS. JUST...GIVE ME A MINUTE TO CATCH MY BREATH.
YOU HAVE UNTIL THE COUNT OF FARLECK!
MAN...IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE A CONCUSSION WHEN YOU'RE JUST A SKULL?
SORRY, KID, BUT I WASN'T TALKING ABOUT YOU.
BOY-THING, I'LL BE NEEDING MY LUGGAGE FROM THE TRUNK.
FINGO!
FARLECK!
OKAY, YOU MISSED YOUR CHANCE TO DIE EASY! NOW WE'RE COMING IN!
NO NEED.
YOU FELLAS WANT A WAR?

## STAN LEE'S SOAPBOX

These brief, random thoughts are being written just a short time after the Attica State Prison tragedy. Now I've no intention of imposing my own opinions upon you about which side, which party or parties might have been right or wrong. Instead, I'd like to discuss the theory of "right or wrong" itself. Is it possible that too much harm, too much injustice has been caused in the name of "right" — in the pursuit of combating "wrong?" In every human conflict, isn't each disputant completely convinced that his particular cause is wholly "right" while the opposing viewpoint is totally "wrong"? And, armed with the sense of being "in the right," don't we dogmatically attempt to impose our own will upon those who hold different convictions? But, what if we had no such hang-ups about right and wrong? What if we remember that what's right for here may be wrong for there? In fact, what's right for you may be wrong for me — and what's right for today may be wrong for some other time. "Right" to a liberal is politically "wrong" to a conservative, just as "right" to a labor leader can be "wrong" to an industrialist, or "right" to a child can seem "wrong" to a parent. Yet, I wonder what life would be like if we weren't so preoccupied with proving ourselves right and the other guy wrong. I wonder if we might not find the peace, the understanding we all seek by striving to relate to each other, to sympathize with each other's problems, to reach out to those who may differ from ourselves and to realize that they too may be "right" in their own way, from their own point of reference. I wonder — mightn't it be worth a try?

Excelsior!

Stan

STAN LEE
FOREVER

I JUST HAPPENED TO BRING ONE WITH ME.
NATALIA ROMANOVA. THE WAR WIDOW.
TO BE CONTINUED...

EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES

# THE AVENGERS #29

## "STARBRAND REBORN" Part Three: THE RISE OF THE WAR WIDOW

The battle for the Starbrand heats up like a supernova as Captain Marvel goes toe-to-toe with Firelord, Ghost Rider races the Silver Surfer and Brood Thor...tries to eat the Avengers. Meanwhile, the Black Widow kicks much butt in outer space with a bold new weapon in her arsenal. That's right, the Black Widow + the War Machine armor = the all-new, all-deadly War Widow.

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE! EMAIL US AT MHEROES@MARVEL.COM AND MARK YOUR MESSAGES "OKAY TO PRINT" FOR A CHANCE TO SEE THEM ANSWERED IN FUTURE ISSUES!

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ZONE